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The lost Lebanon 7 not forgotten: Ron

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Washington (News Bureau)—President Reagan yesterday insisted the seven Americans still captive in Lebanon were not "out of sight, out of mind" now that the drama of the TWA hostage crisis has ended. But he admitted that the United States did not know where they were and could not try to rescue them.

In a White House session with out-of-town reporters, Reagan said he was aware "of some talk here and there" by relatives of the seven who "out of their frustration and grief have said: 'Out of sight, out of mind.'"

"That isn't true," Reagan said. "There's never been a minute, from the first kidnaping on, that we've not been doing everything we can."

The first of the seven to be kidnaped was William Buckley, 58, a political officer at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, who was abducted March 18, 1984.

Reagan said: "We meant it when we tried our best to get them included with the 39 (TWA hostages) that came home. But evidently, they're in the hands of others not having to do with the same hijackers as the last time."

REAGAN SAID the best available intelligence indicates that the Americans are "being moved around quite often." U.S. intelligence officials have said the Americans were held captive in and around Beirut and several have been moved in and out of the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley in Lebanon.

A Lebanese official here insisted Syria could find and obtain the immediate release of seven Americans and six other foreigners kidnaped in Lebanon over the last 15 months.

"I am sure if Syria put all its weight it could find these individuals, but it might require far more involvement than Syria believes is proper at the moment," the Lebanese aide said.

THROUGHOUT the 17-day ordeal of the TWA hostages, senior U.S. officials were hopeful that Syrian President Hafez Assad could "deliver" the other seven Americans, but they stressed it might require Syrian military action—a step Assad was reluctant to take in the dangerous uncertainties of Lebanon.

The two men said the Syrian role for the time being is to "insure these individuals are not harmed" and to make sure they are released "at the right moment."

Reagan told the White House gathering: "The situation is: How do you rescue someone if you don't know where they are? How do you rescue them if at the same time you would have to reveal yourselves to the point that you might be bringing home a body instead of a human being?"